



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Start the Conversation

- 1.** The author explains how things in nature can be animate (living) and inanimate (not living). What was your reaction to this viewpoint that everything is alive? Does it change your opinion on the role plants play in our everyday lives?
- 2.** “Skywoman Falling” is an Indigenous story of Creation. How would you compare and contrast this story to the account of Creation told in Genesis? Do you agree with the author that Eve “got the short end of the stick?”
- 3.** A major theme throughout the book is reciprocity - that humans, the land and environment depend on each other—and this relationship is sacred. How does Kimmerer successfully explain this to the reader? What do you wish she had explained further? What aspects of your life embrace this theme?
- 4.** In “The Gift of Strawberries,” Kimmerer uses wild strawberries to introduce the concept of the “gift economy” vs. what she describes as the Western view of the earth as “property.” Does this perspective change the way you view our relationship with the world? Can you give examples of how nature has provided you with gifts?
- 5.** According to the author, what is the purpose of “ceremony?” How could you apply Kimmerer’s definition of “ceremony” to ceremonies you have witnessed or participated in during your own life?
- 6.** What is Kimmerer’s purpose in presenting scientific and Indigenous teaching side by side for us to examine?
- 7.** In “Witch Hazel,” the author tells the story of her friendship with an elderly neighbor, but through the eyes of her daughter. Why do you think she chose to tell the story this way? What is the special significance of the Witch Hazel plant?

- 8.** *Braiding Sweetgrass*, though originally published in 2013, didn't become a bestseller until February 2020, and continued to grow in popularity/sales during the pandemic. What messages in this book feel particularly relevant or meaningful to you after having lived through (and still living through) the COVID-19 crisis?
- 9.** In her essay "The Three Sisters," Kimmerer writes "together their stems inscribe what looks to me like a blueprint for the world, a map of balance and harmony." What does each of the Three Sisters - corns, beans and squash - bring to their reciprocal relationship? What is the message of community, both in the plant and human world, that is illustrated in this story?
- 10.** Reflect upon Kimmerer's statement "environmentalism becomes synonymous with dire predictions and powerless feelings" from "The Sacred and the Superfund." Did you feel more or less hopeful about the state of our natural world after reading *Braiding Sweetgrass*? What action can you take within your own community to bring about positive environmentalism and ecological restoration/preservation?
- 11.** Are there practical insights and wisdom you will take away from this book and incorporate into your everyday life? Do you already practice some?
- 12.** In "Allegiance to Gratitude," Kimmerer talks about the Thanksgiving Address. Describe who and/or what your Ceremony of Greeting would give thanks to?
- 13.** What is a favorite chapter or quote from the book?
- 14.** Thinking about this quote from the book, "Knowing that you love the earth changes you, activates you to defend and protect and celebrate. But when you feel that the earth loves you in return, that feeling transforms the relationship from a one-way street into a sacred bond," was there a time that you had that connection to the earth?
- 15.** Was there anything you learned from *Braiding Sweetgrass* about Native/Indigenous cultures that you found surprising? Please share an example.



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